

Role and duties of the Chairperson

- **Before the viva**

The chairperson, internal, external examiner(s) and candidate must be present and the oral exam must be re-arranged if anyone is unavailable to attend.

The supervisor should not attend the oral examination but is expected to be available on the day of the examination.

It is the chairperson's responsibility:

- to undertake the administrative duties of the internal examiner in cases where two external examiners are appointed, and liaise with the external examiners, the candidate and the supervisor in order to arrange a suitable time, date and location for the oral examination and to re-arrange the oral examination should anyone not be able to be present;
- to familiarise themselves with the fire evacuation plans for the venue;
- to be familiar with the procedures for research degree examinations and ensure that those attending the viva understand the procedures to be followed;
- to raise any queries with Research Student Administration.

- **During the viva**

There are no rules governing the length of the oral examination. It is at the examiners' discretion to make it as long or short as they think necessary.

It is the chairperson's responsibility:

- to introduce those present and put everyone at ease;
- to explain the form the oral examination will take, what happens afterwards; and ensure that those present understand the procedures to be followed;
- to remain present throughout the oral examination;
- to ensure that during the discussion there is sufficient sensitivity to equal opportunity issues and to remain impartial throughout the proceedings;
- to make brief notes concerning the conduct of the oral examination and deliberation and retain these for a period of 12 months, for possible use in the case of an appeal or complaint;
- to intervene if there is a danger of misunderstanding, unfairness, bias or unprofessional behaviour by the examiners or candidate;
- to pause the oral examination for short breaks if necessary or as requested. For example, to accommodate reasonable adjustments, for oral examinations lasting 2 hours or more or where there is a period of tension between the examiners and the candidate.

- **At the end of the viva examination**

It is the chairperson's responsibility:

- to ask the candidate to withdraw while the examiners deliberate, making it clear to the candidate that the chairperson is not an examiner and will not participate in the deliberations.
- to invite the candidate and supervisor(s) to hear the examiners' provisional recommendation
- to ensure that the examiners are aware of their responsibility to complete the examination report form and to return this and their final recommendation to Research Student Administration together with a detailed list of any required corrections.
- To complete the Chairperson's Viva Report form and return it to Research Student Administration.

Interruptions to the oral examination

Where there is an unexpected interruption to the oral examination the chairperson should take the lead in instigating appropriate action:

- confirm to those present that no further discussions will take place until the oral examination is reconvened;
- record the time and duration of the break in the chairperson's notes and on the attached Chairperson's Viva Report form;
- where a fire alarm occurs during the oral examination, immediately stop the proceedings and ensure that the candidate and examiners make their way to the relevant assembly point;
- If the period of evacuation is not prolonged, and if the Safety or Fire Officer confirms that normal use of the building can resume, the oral examination may be restarted at the discretion of the chairperson in consultation with the examiners and the candidate.
- Where it is not possible for the oral examination to continue, the examiners, in consultation with the chairperson, should determine whether sufficient discussion has taken place for a final recommendation to be made or whether a new date needs to be arranged in order to continue.

The Code of Practice for the Assessment of Research Degree Theses is available at:

<http://www.as.bham.ac.uk/legislation/codesofpractice.shtml>.